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For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON PUBLIC FASTS.

IT should indeed be cause of real rejoicing to hear of, and to see some fruits, of a disposition in the rulers of the land, to endeavour to remove some of the many evils with which we are surrounded, and also to behold a faithful endeavour on the part of the people, for a reformation in heart and manners, so much wanting among all ranks and denominations.

But when we see, instead of this necessary work going forward, the same course of wrong conduct pursuing every day, and no hopes of amendment, the mind sickens at the melancholy prospect, and is led to enquire, "To what purpose is the multitude of your fasts?" It is in vain for any, in either public or private life, to attempt to atone for guilty actions, by assuming at stated times a devotional appearance, and conforming to certain ceremonials, whilst the heart is not made better, nor even possessing a wish to be so. It is to me a mystery, how those in power can conceive, that by setting apart a particular day, now and then, for the purpose of what is called a public fast, any good is gained or any evil averted, the people are not made better, nor is a single burthen lightened thereby. Let the eye turn almost which way it may, a gloomy scene presents itself to the view.

War, with innumerable evils in its

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train, spreading horror and devastation on all that comes within reach of its baneful breath, the fair face of nature is desolated, and the earth groans under the weight of accumulated evils arising from the horrid system. Even in places far remote from the immediate scene of action, the consequences are dreadfully felt. The ambition of the great, and the schemes they adopt to uphold their warlike measures, encompass the earth with cruelty, and torrents of human blood are shed to satisfy (and still unsatisfied) the unbounded avarice of a few.

Look to this, ye rulers, and reflect on the miseries entailed on your fellow-men, by your unwise schemes.

To what purpose is the multitude of your fasts? The farce will not take, the measure will not avail, it is only adding sin to the heap already overgrown by the accumulation of evils. Think not by such means to atone for the wrongs brought on the country by the abuse of power, or for the immensity of human blood shed in the prosecution of your ambitious pursuits. Prayers mingled with the blood of our fellow-creatures, ascendeth not with acceptance, neither will the God of peace, who delighteth not in iniquity, receive such a fast as ye have chosen.

A virtuous exertion in the cause of real reformation to remove evil from the land, and to undo the heavy burdens, would be of more avail, than ten thousand such fasts as we have seen.

N. S.

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